

Message Text

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TAGS: PORG, UNGA, RQ

SUBJECT: STATEMENT ON PUERTO RICO

1. TEXT FOLLOWS OF PROPOSED STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR
YOUNG, WHICH WE UNDERSTAND MISSION WILL ISSUE AS PRESS
RELEASE AT BEGINNING OF NEXT WEEK, BEFORE COMMITTEE OF
24 BEGINS DISCUSSION OF PUERTO RICO.

2. BEGIN TEXT:

THIS WEEK THE COMMITTEE OF 24 WILL DISCUSS PUERTO RICO.
IT WILL DO SO SOME WEEKS AFTER PRESIDENT CARTER'S PROCLA-
MATION TO THE PEOPLE OF PUERTO RICO THAT HIS ADMINISTRATION
WILL ACCEPT WHATEVER DECISION ON THEIR FUTURE STATUS THE
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PUERTO RICAN PEOPLE MIGHT MAKE--COMMONWEALTH, INDEPENDENCE,
MUTUALLY-AGREED MODIFICATIONS OF THE COMMONWEALTH STATUS
OR STATEHOOD. IN LIGHT OF THIS DISCUSSION AND THAT PROCLA-
MATION, I WOULD LIKE TO COMMENT ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
THE PEOPLE OF PUERTO RICO AND THE UNITED STATES.

OUR FATES HAVE BEEN TIED TOGETHER FOR SOME EIGHTY YEARS.

IN THAT PERIOD WE HAVE TOGETHER SOUGHT TO EVOLVE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ARRANGEMENTS WHICH COULD RESPOND TO THE EVOLVING REALITIES AND ASPIRATIONS OF THE ISLAND. THE

PUERTO RICAN PEOPLE WERE GRANTED U.S. CITIZENSHIP IN 1917. AFTER WORLD WAR II THE TWO SIDES AGREED ON A PROGRAM OF GREATER POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CONTROL TO BE PLACED IN THE HANDS OF THE PEOPLE OF THE ISLAND. IN 1948 THE PEOPLE OF PUERTO RICO BEGAN TO ELECT THEIR OWN GOVERNOR, AS WELL AS THE MEMBERS OF THEIR LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY. OPERATION BOOTSTRAP BEGAN A PROCESS OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WHICH LIFTED THE ISLAND ONTO A MUCH HIGHER LEVEL OF PROSPERITY.

THE MOST SIGNIFICANT STEP IN THAT PERIOD TOOK PLACE IN 1952 WHEN THE PEOPLE OF PUERTO RICO OPTED FOR A COMMONWEALTH RELATIONSHIP WITH THE MAINLAND UNITED STATES, IN A FREE AND DEMOCRATIC PLEBISCITE. IN 1953, ACCORDINGLY, THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY RECOGNIZED THAT WITH THE CREATION OF THE COMMONWEALTH, THE PEOPLE OF PUERTO RICO HAD EFFECTIVELY EXERCISED THEIR RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION. IN DOING SO, THE ASSEMBLY RIGHTLY CONSIDERED THAT THE DECLARATION REGARDING NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES NO LONGER APPLIED TO PUERTO RICO.

A QUARTER-CENTURY HAS PASSED SINCE THAT TIME, ALONG WITH LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MANY EVENTS AFFECTING THE ISLAND. THE CURRENT GOVERNOR OF PUERTO RICO, THE HONORABLE CARLOS ROMERO BARCELO, HAS CALLED FOR A REFERENDUM ON THE STATUS OF THE ISLAND AFTER THE 1980 ELECTIONS. OTHER LEADING POLITICAL FIGURES ON THE ISLAND HAVE ALSO CALLED FOR A STATUS REFERENDUM.

UNDER THE TERMS OF THE COMMONWEALTH AGREEMENT AND IN CONFORMITY WITH THE PRINCIPLE OF SELF-DETERMINATION, THE PEOPLE OF PUERTO RICO THEMSELVES, NOT THE UNITED STATES, SET THE TERMS OF ANY STATUS REFERENDUM. THE APPROPRIATE ROLE OF THE U.S. GOVERNMENT IS TO SUPPORT THE RIGHT OF THE PUERTO RICAN PEOPLE TO MAKE THEIR OWN CHOICE IN THE FULL DIGNITY OF THAT RIGHT OF SELF-DETERMINATION.

THIS IS ACCORDINGLY THE POSITION OF PRESIDENT CARTER. I WOULD LIKE TO QUOTE AT LENGTH FROM HIS PROCLAMATION OF JULY 25 TO THE PEOPLE OF PUERTO RICO, BECAUSE I FEEL IT BRINGS OUT SO CLEARLY OUR BELIEFS IN THIS REGARD.

"THE UNITED STATES REMAINS FULLY COMMITTED TO THE PRINCIPLE OF SELF-DETERMINATION FOR THE PEOPLE OF PUERTO RICO . . . WE CONTINUE TO REGARD IT AS THE FUNDAMENTAL

PRINCIPLE IN DECIDING PUERTO RICO'S FUTURE.

"MY ADMINISTRATION WILL RESPECT THE WISHES OF THE PEOPLE
OF PUERTO RICO AND YOUR RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION.
WHATEVER DECISION THE PEOPLE OF PUERTO RICO MAY WISH TO

TAKE -- STATEHOOD, INDEPENDENCE, COMMONWEALTH STATUS OR
MUTUALLY-AGREED MODIFICATIONS IN THAT STATUS -- IT WILL
BE YOURS, REACHED IN ACCORDANCE WITH YOUR OWN TRADITIONS,
DEMOCRATICALLY AND PEACEFULLY.

"SHOULD THE GOVERNMENT OF PUERTO RICO DECIDE TO HOLD A
REFERENDUM, I WILL SUPPORT, AND URGE THE CONGRESS TO
SUPPORT, WHATEVER DECISION THE PEOPLE OF PUERTO RICO
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REACH."

THE UNITED STATES WILL RESPECT AND SUPPORT THE RIGHTS OF
THE PUERTO RICAN PEOPLE TO DETERMINE AGAIN THEIR POLITICAL
COURSE THROUGH A FREE AND DEMOCRATIC REFERENDUM. THE
OPEN AND DEMOCRATIC NATURE OF THIS PROCESS SHOULD BE
CLEAR TO ALL. OURS IS AN OPEN SOCIETY, AND IN THAT
CONNECTION THE UNITED STATES WOULD DO NOTHING TO STAND
IN THE WAY OF A DECISION BY THE PUERTO RICAN PEOPLE TO
EXTEND AN INVITATION TO THE UN, THE OAS OR OTHER APPRO-
PRIATE INTERNATIONAL BODIES TO OBSERVE A REFERENDUM.

PUERTO RICO IS A SELF-GOVERNING COMMONWEALTH, POSSESSING
A FREE, DEMOCRATIC, MULTI-PARTY SYSTEM. ALL POLITICAL
GROUPS ARE AT LIBERTY TO EXPRESS THEIR VIEWS, AS THEY
MOST LIKELY WILL DO IN THE UPCOMING DELIBERATIONS OF THE
COMMITTEE OF 24, AND TO MOBILIZE THEIR SUPPORTERS. ITS
PRESENT RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES WAS FREELY
CHOSEN BY THE PEOPLE OF PUERTO RICO.

ANY CHANGE IN THIS RELATIONSHIP WILL ALSO BE FREELY
CHOSEN. THIS HAS BEEN THE POSITION OF SUCCESSIVE U.S.
ADMINISTRATIONS. THIS IS THE COMMITMENT, PUBLICLY
EXPRESSED, OF PRESIDENT CARTER. THIS IS THE VIEW EMBODIED
IN HIS PROCLAMATION OF JULY 25, 1978 TO THE PEOPLE OF
PUERTO RICO, ISSUED ON THE EIGHTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THEIR
ASSOCIATION WITH THE UNITED STATES.

END TEXT. CHRISTOPHER

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